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Jesuit universities get millions in donations from alumni, others

By **Catholic News Service**

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WASHINGTON (CNS) -- Two Jesuit-run Catholic universities have received the largest philanthropic gifts in their history, while a third has been given \$8 million by the owners of the New Orleans Saints football franchise.

Georgetown University in Washington received an \$87 million endowment to support medical research at its medical center, while businessman and Fordham University alumnus Mario J. Gabelli donated \$25 million to the New York school to expand student scholarships and faculty chairs and to create a new Center of Global Investment Analysis.

The \$8 million gift to Loyola University New Orleans from the Gayle & Tom Benson Charitable Foundation, run by the Saints owners, will be used to renovate a former library building to house the Tom Benson Jesuit Center and a chapel.

The Georgetown endowment originated in a \$1.2 million charitable trust established by the will of the late Harry J. Toulmin in 1965. His widow, Virginia, managed the trust for the next 45 years and grew it to its current value. She died June 13 at age 84.

The gift will fund the Warwick Evans and Mary Mason Washington Evans Medical Research Endowment in honor of Harry Toulmin's grandparents. Warwick Evans was the first graduate of Georgetown's School of Medicine in 1852 and went on to become a professor of anatomy there.

"Harry really worshipped his grandfather, who was this great man -- successful physician and prominent Washington figure," said Virginia Toulmin in 1997. "Harry was a strong believer in educational institutions, and even though he didn't graduate from Georgetown, Harry loved his grandfather and his grandfather loved Georgetown."

Previously, the largest gift given to Georgetown was \$75 million in 2008 from the estate of Robert J. McDevitt, a 1940 Georgetown graduate, which is being used to endow faculty positions across the university.

Gabelli, a second-generation American and the first in his family to attend college, graduated summa cum laude in 1965 from Fordham's College of Business Administration, which will be renamed the Gabelli School of Business. Gabelli is chairman and CEO of GAMCO Investors, an asset management and financial services firm.

The new center established with his gift will bring together students, faculty and professionals in the financial community to enhance scholarship in the study and understanding of capital markets.

"Education is the great leveler, the engine of America's meritocracy, and it must remain so for the country to compete in the global economy," Gabelli said in a statement. "My family always stressed the importance of education as a stepping stone to create a better life. I am proud and blessed to be able to contribute to that effort."

Donna Rapaccioli, who is the business school's dean and also is dean of the business faculty, said Gabelli's gift has given the Fordham school a place "at the table in the financial capital of the world."

"He both understands and fervently believes in the transformative power of education, and with his very generous gift, he will transform the way business students are educated at Fordham," she added.

At Loyola New Orleans, Jesuit Father Kevin Wildes, president, said the Benson foundation gift will help to "enhance Jesuit values of the university."

"Nothing is more important than ensuring that our Jesuit identity remains strong as we move forward," Father Wildes said. "Mr. Benson's investment in and unwavering support of this university will make certain that our fundamental Jesuit tradition remains central to the daily life of Loyola's community."

Benson, who attended Loyola University and received an honorary degree in 1987, has been a longtime supporter of the university. In 1999, his gift of \$500,000 funded the first phase of construction of the Gregory R. Choppin Chemistry Wing in Monroe Hall, and a \$2 million donation in 2008 was used to create the Jesuit Social Research Institute and a fellowship honoring Jesuit Father James C. Carter.

Benson also has been a major donor to the Shirley Landry Benson PACE Center, a program for all-inclusive care for the elderly, operated by Catholic Charities in New Orleans, and has given a \$14 million challenge gift to the capital campaign of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio.

In other philanthropic news at U.S. Catholic schools, St. Ambrose University in Davenport, Iowa, announced a \$1 million legacy gift from the estate of Father Joseph Kokjohn, a priest who called St. Ambrose home for more than 60 years.

The Rev. Joseph E. Kokjohn Endowment for Catholic Peace and Justice has been established to further the education of St. Ambrose students in the Catholic tradition of peace and social justice. Uses for the endowment's earnings will include teaching, research and activity in such areas as the early church, ecumenical councils, and 20th-century figures and movements in nonviolence.

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